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WEDNESDAY HIGHLIGHTS

+ Secretary-General to send Marrack Goulding, Under-Secretary-General for Peace-keeping Operations, to Angola, where situation remains critical.

+ Secretary-General sends message of congratulations to Governor Bill Clinton, President-Elect of the United States of America.

+ Secretary-General expresses grave concern at "insecurity prevailing in Liberia".

+ Commission of Experts on humanitarian violations in former Yugoslavia holds first meeting; United Nations Legal Counsel, in opening address, says its conclusions will be scrutinized around the world.

+ Palestine refugee problems will be "discussed, negotiated and, hopefully, solved" at multilateral peace talks, not at United Nations, Israel tells Special Political Committee.

+ Special Commission's most recent inspection team in Iraq received "mixed signals", with both greater openness from Iraq and continued withholding of information, Commission spokesman says.

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Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali has decided to send Marrack Goulding, Under-Secretary-General for Peace-keeping Operations, on a mission to Angola, where the situation remains critical.

In a press release issued tonight at Headquarters, the Spokesman for the Secretary-General also announced that Mr. Goulding would arrive in the capital city of Luanda on Friday, 6 November. His instructions are to support the Secretary-General's Special Representative, Margaret Anstee, in her efforts to consolidate the cease-fire and to discuss with her the next steps to be taken in order to restore the peace process in Angola.

(more)

For information media—not an official record

In this mission, Mr. Goulding will work closely with representatives of the three observers of the Angolan peace process - Portugal, Russia and United States.

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Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali today sent his congratulations to Governor Bill Clinton of Arkansas on his election as the 42nd President of the United States of America.

In a message to the President-Elect, the Secretary-General stated that, at this time of dramatic change around the world, when so many peoples yearned for democracy and so many governments struggle in their transition toward democratic institutions, the example of the American people exercizing their constitutional right was heartening for the entire international community.

Mr. Boutros Boutros-Ghali also pointed out that, as a founding member of the United Nations, the United States has always been a strong supporter of the ideals of the Organization.

The Secretary-General expressed his readiness to work with the President-Elect "on the great world agenda which today engages the United Nations".

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In a press release issued today at Headquarters, the Secretary-General has expressed his grave concern at the insecurity now prevailing in Liberia, particularly in the Monrovia area, as a result of the renewed and intensified fighting which posed a threat to the security and lives of the civilian population.

These recent alarming developments, he went on, would shortly be taken up by the Standing Committee of Five of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) at the Summit Meeting which was scheduled to take place this coming weekend. In this connection, the Secretary-General called on all parties to exercise maximum restraint and to avoid at all costs additional civilian casualties and needless destruction.

Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali also indicated that only non-essential United Nations staff had been withdrawn and that the Organization and the international community stood ready to increase humanitarian assistance as the situation permited.

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The five members of the Commission of Experts, established by the Security Council on 6 October to investigate and report on evidence of grave breaches of the Geneva Convention and other violations of international humanitarian law in the territory of the former Yugoslavia, held their first meeting at Headquarters in New York today.

(more)

Opening the meeting this morning, United Nations Legal Counsel, Under-Secretary-General Carl-August Fleischhauer, said that the work of Commission would be closely scrutinized by the international community, not only in relation to the situation in former Yugoslavia, but also in the wider context of the codification and progressive development of international criminal law.

He pointed out that in addition to its fact-finding function, the Commission was also mandated to establish evidence that would enable the Secretary-General to recommend further appropriate steps so that persons who commited or ordered the commission of grave breaches of international humanitarian law would be held individually responsible for such breaches.

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The problems of Palestine refugees would be "discussed, negotiated and, hopefully, solved" in the multilateral peace talks now taking place, and not at the United Nations", the representative of Israel told the Special Political Committee today.

He went on to say that progress in the peace process must be accompanied by the creation of systems for regional cooperation, and pledged that, in the current peace-making talks, the new Government of his country would work towards the creation of a new Middle East in which "new resources were no longer devoted to the arms race, but to development".

The Special Committee is presently considering the report of the Commissioner-General of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), which says that, in sharp contrast to the optimism created by the opening of the Middle East peace talks, the situation in the occupied territory of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip remained critical and conditions in the refugees camps appalling.

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The most recent inspection team of the United Nations Special Commission on Iraqi disarmament (UNSCOM) had received "mixed signals" from Iraq, Commission Spokesman Tim Trevane told the press at Headquarters today. Addressing a briefing together with the Commission's Chief Inspector, Nikita Smidovich, he said that UNSCOM had seen the most recent inspection as a "touchstone" in its relations with Iraq and this country's compliance with the various United Nations resolutions on the matter. The outcome had been both positive and negative.

On the positive side, the inspection team had obtained "new and detailed information on certain operation aspects of the use of weapons of mass destruction during the period prior to the Special Commission's operations". Previously, Iraq had refused to supply such information, arguing that it was operational and therefore not relevant to the Commission.

(more)

On the negative side, there had been "fairly unpleasant things" said about the inspection teams and their intentions by President Saddam Hussein, the Deputy Prime Minister and the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Iraq. There were also still problems with the treatment of the inspectors, and Iraq still refused to supply data on its suppliers of equipment and materials during the Persian Gulf war, he said.

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CORRECTION:

The first headline in Tuesday Highlights, 3 November, should have read:

** "United Nations mission headed by a newly-appointed representative of the Secretary-General for Nagorno-Karabakh, Omar Halim, to visit that region during second half of November."

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